

Walk the Treetops

#treetopsnz

HOKITIKA'S
MUST SEE
ATTRACTION

AMAZING VIEWS
THRILLS
ALL WEATHER
FAMILY FUN
CAFE
SOUVENIRS

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Westcoast
treetop walk & café

HOKITIKA - NEW ZEALAND

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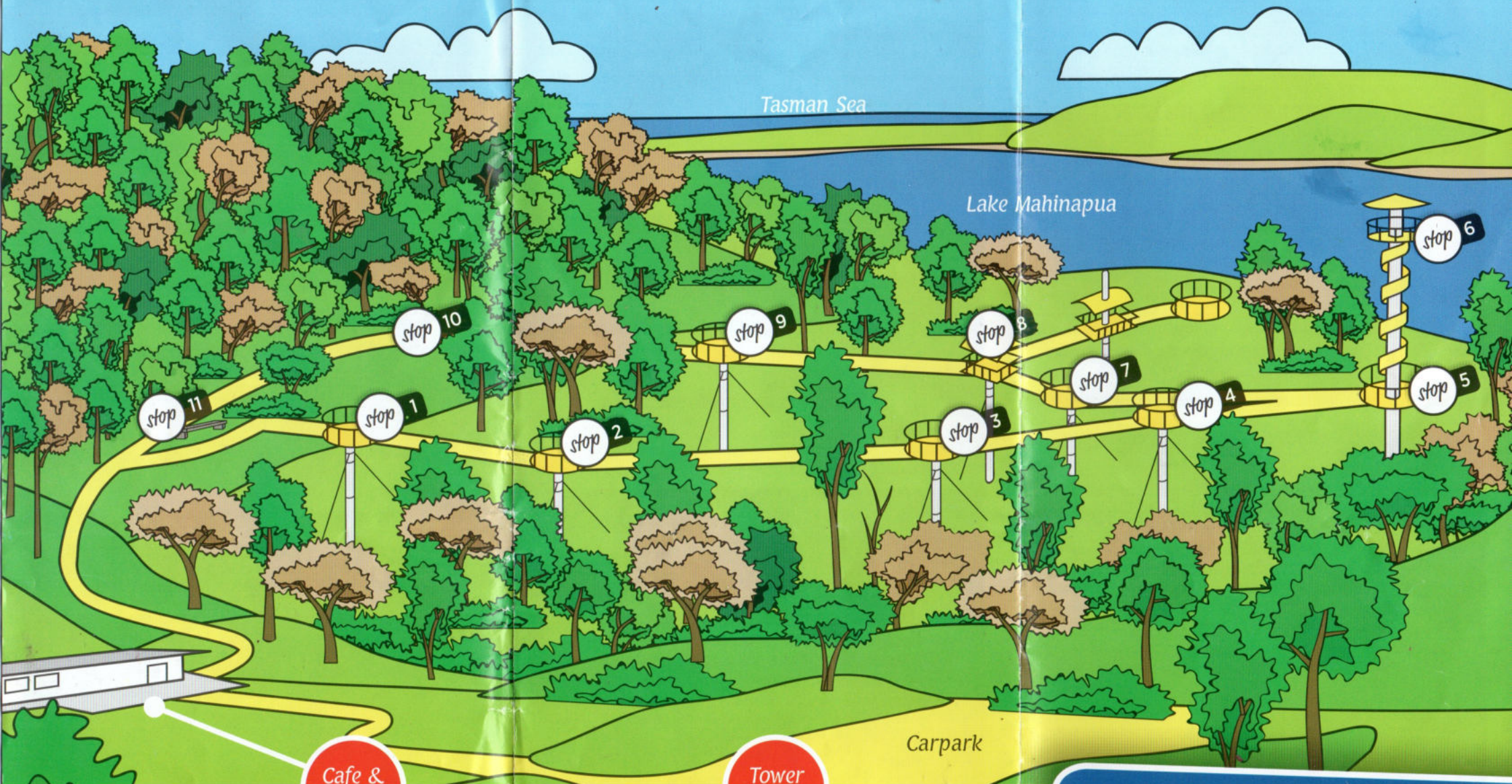
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Endorsed
Visitor
Activity





Cafe &
Retail

Tower
view



Westcoast
treetop walk & café
HOKITIKA - NEW ZEALAND

Ancient forests in a New Land

stop 1

The forests you see before you contain plants related to some of the earliest species to colonise the Earth. These temperate lowland forests are dominated by the giant Podocarp trees that surround you. Under the forest canopy reside ferns, mosses, liverworts and hornworts, all of which are very ancient in origin. New Zealand/Aotearoa has been isolated in the Pacific Ocean ever since this land broke away from the supercontinent Gondwanaland about 65 million years ago. The primitive species aboard have been evolving in isolation ever since. Author and biologist Jared Diamond refers to New Zealand as 'the nearest approach to life on another planet'. More modern flowering plant species have made their way to these isolated islands mainly on the wind blowing across from the giant landmass of Australia.

Regeneration of forest

stop 2



Looking to your right (towards the mountains) there are a lot of smaller trees which are the young versions of the larger Podocarp trees you see around you. They start with a conical shape, very much like a traditional Christmas tree. As they get older, they will shed the lower branches and have long straight trunks with a crown of greenery emerging out of the canopy of the forest. These forest giants were a bonanza for loggers as they had long lengths of timber with no lower branches, which were great to mill and sell. The wood is also of excellent quality, particularly the Rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*) which makes up many of the wooden buildings in New Zealand built before the 1970's. Logging of these trees has all but ceased and they are now seen as a taonga (treasures) and are protected.

Miro and Kereru

stop 3



Many trees rely on the birds to help them spread around the forest. The Miro tree (*Prumnopitys ferruginea*) in front of you here has very large crimson fruit in autumn and relies on the wood pigeon or kereru (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) to eat them and then distribute the seeds throughout the forest. The kereru, notable for its noisy wing-beat and striking plumage is the only New Zealand bird that can eat a large fruit like this and also pass it through their digestive system, so the miro tree and the kereru mutually benefit each other. Forests all over the world are full of relationships like these, without one the other will struggle to survive.

Orchids in the treetops

stop 4



New Zealand/Aotearoa has many orchids but most people have never seen one (or are not aware of it if they have). They are usually smaller plants with little flowers and are often growing in the tops of the trees and rocky outcrops. This treetop walkway offers a unique opportunity to see these special little orchids. The Easter orchid (*Earina autumnalis*) flowers in autumn and has a rich perfume that lies thickly in the air around. A close relative of the Easter orchid is the bamboo or hanging tree orchid (*Earina mucronata*) which has cream to yellow flowers. There are also Slipper orchids or Pekapeka (*Winika cunninghamii*) in these treetops, which flower in summer to early autumn.

Lichens, mosses and ferns

stop 5



The mosses and ferns you can see in the treetops and the forest floor in this area are very prevalent throughout New Zealand/Aotearoa forests. They are primitive and have very ancient breeding systems with no seeds but spore instead. Most mosses thrive in a moist environment without too much drying sunlight, which means they prefer the forest floor. The Lichens (seen as a whitish green plant-like mass growing on rocks, up trees or on the ground) are an interesting group of species. They are a mix of fungi, algae and sometimes cyanobacteria, all working together to make a kind of hybrid that lives in very harsh places few others will grow in.

Mountains to the sea

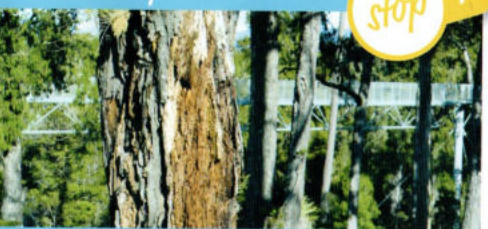
stop 6



From the top of the Hokitika Tower you can see from the mountains to the sea. The mountains to the east are the Southern Alps, formed from the collision of the Pacific Plate to the east and the Indo-Australian Plate to the west. These plates collide in the South Island creating these stunning mountains. In the last 100,000 years, there have been a number of glaciations, which have helped shape this landscape. Looking north back towards Hokitika is a terrace, undoubtedly a deposit left by a retreating glacier called a lateral moraine. This landscape is littered with evidence of a large glaciation, which formed lakes, valleys and hills as these glaciers flowed like rivers of ice, carving the landscape as they went. The Tasman Sea is a wild and windy place with large waves pounding relentlessly at its shores. As the sediments are washed down the rivers, they are then churned and tumbled again until they are sand which gets washed northwards up the coast to be deposited on Farewell Spit at the northwest tip of the South Island.

Biodiversity

stop 7



Biodiversity is a word you may often hear but its importance is paramount in a forest such as this. The old rotting trees in this area offer food sources for insects, birds and even bacteria in the ever-continuing process of life and death. The forest floor has as much diversity (perhaps more) than the canopy above. The insects that live in the forest floor provide food for many birds including the kiwi (*Apteryx*) which probes the ground for worms and other insects with its long beak. New Zealand/Aotearoa has many species like weka, robin and tomtit that live on the forest floor's insects.

The Emerging Canopy Rainforest

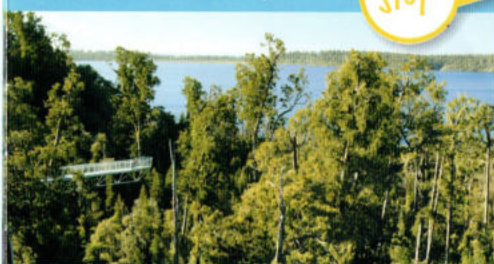
stop 8



This temperate lowland rainforest has three main tiers or levels. The emerging canopy that is around 20-60 metres in height consists mainly the tall Podocarp trees you see around you. Below this is a sub-canopy at around 6-15 metres with many broader leaved species such as Kamahi (*Weinmannia racemosa*), Broadleaf (*Griselinia littoralis*) and Westland Quintinia (*Quintinia acutifolia*) dominating this level with tree ferns (from the Dicksonia and Cyathea genus) often sitting just below this level. Mosses and ground ferns dominate the forest floor although there are a number of other plants that thrive in this low light environment as well as young Podocarp trees, which benefit when protected from the direct sunlight.

The West Coast Rainforest

stop 9



This area is known for its high rainfall and allows this temperate lowland rainforest to thrive as an ecosystem. The wettest rain gauge in New Zealand sits around 30km inland from here in the Cropp River Valley where in 1997 they recorded 18.4 metres of rain over a 12 month period. As air travels across the Tasman Sea on the westerly winds, it picks up moisture through evaporation off the sea surface. When the moisture laden air reaches the western slopes of the Southern Alps, the air is forced upwards and it cools which causes it to release its' moisture as rain.

Epiphytes

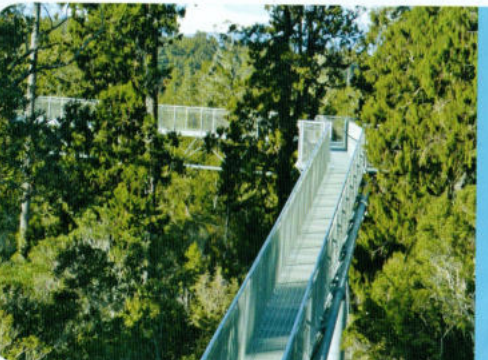
stop 10



Epiphytes are friendly hangers on, using the larger trees as a ladder to the sunlight in the canopy. There are many varieties at this viewpoint including Supplejack (*Ripogonum scandens*) and Kiekie (*Freycinetia banksia*). Right through the treetops you can see perching lilies (*Astelia solandri*) mosses, orchids and many others. Botanists studying epiphytes in the South Westland area have identified an incredible diversity of these perching plants. Epiphytes are different from parasites which tap in to the goodness of their host and can potentially kill them over a period of time.

The Treetop Walkway Structure

stop 11



Work began on the Treetop Walkway structure in July 2012 and doors opened in December of that year. The steel structure was prefabricated in Australia in two months, and brought to Hokitika in small parts where it was re-assembled amazingly in only six weeks. 400m³ of concrete was used in the construction so the structure can withstand the wildest weather the West Coast can throw at it. With over 13,500 bolts used to put the structure together, this engineering masterpiece was designed to move with the wind and be as solid as a rimu tree. The Hokitika Tower has 107 steps to reach an impressive 47 metres, which provides a spectacular vista of nature's finest mountains, lakes and forest.



Other walks close by...

Lake Mahinapua

Picnicking, walks, swimming, boating and camping.

Access: 10km south of Hokitika on SH6, turn onto the Lake Mahinapua access road.

Jum Michel Walk

Time: 15 minutes, one way
Distance: 1km

This easy flat path can be accessed from the camping and recreation area, passing through lush native bush, emerging at the start of the access road, opposite the Mahinapua Hotel. Along the way you will notice small panels that identify tree and shrub species.

Bellbird Walk

Time: 10 minutes, loop walk
Distance: 450m

This walk starts at the southern end of the camping area. The walk is very pretty and circles an old gold dredge pond coming out very close to the entrance.

Swimmers Beach Walk

Time: 15 minutes, one way
Distance: 900m

Leading to a secluded beach, this track starts north of the main lake carpark, taking you through native bush down to the lake shore.

Mananui Tramway Mahinapua Walkway

Time: 2 hours, one way
Distance: 6km

Access: The walkway goes from a signposted carpark 8km south of Hokitika on SH6, through to an eastern carpark on the Woodstock-Rimu Road and can be walked from either end.

This walkway features a number of historical relics as it follows an old logging tramway. This track is suitable for people of low to average fitness and comfortable, strong footwear is recommended. Easy mountain biking.

Picnic Point

Time: 30 minutes, one way
Distance: 1.2km

Access: The return walk to Picnic Point is from a carpark on the Woodstock-Rimu Road.

Close to the eastern edge of the Mananui Tramline there is a 30 minute detour that takes you to Picnic Point, a small pebbly beach on the edge of Lake Mahinapua.

Mananui Bush Walk

Time: 15 minutes, one way
Distance: 600m

Access: Signposted 9km south of Hokitika on SH6 and approximately 1km north of the Lake Mahinapua Hotel.

Leading to the sea, this walk passes through a coastal forest remnant and comes out through flax behind the first dune. You return via the same way.

Hello and Welcome...

Welcome to the only treetop walk of its kind in New Zealand.

Your journey today will take you on a 1.2 km loop track where you will experience a walk in the bush, elevated 20 metres above the forest floor. Every day it is different here, depending on the weather or the time of year that you visit.

As you roam among the forest we do request that you adhere to a few simple rules to minimise the impact on the environment and to allow you and others to enjoy your time here.

Conditions of Entry:

- **Keep to the paths – this allows those tiny plants an opportunity to grow.**
- **No smoking, food or drink – we don't want to encourage pests in the environment as those pests can kill our native birds.**
- **You can't bring your dog (sorry about that) – they can scare our native ground dwelling birds.**
- **So others can enjoy the environment please refrain from making loud noises.**
- **If you have small children, please keep them close and get them to use their walking feet on the structure.**
- **You are entering Conservation land. Entry is entirely at your own risk. Westcoast Tree Top Walk & Café does not accept any liability whatsoever for any accident, injury, or loss of any kind to any person or property entering on to these premises.**

If it's raining, or looking like it might, please make sure you collect an umbrella from ticketing – this way you won't get wet while enjoying the rainforest.

You can read more about these walks on the Department of Conservation website,
www.doc.govt.nz

Enjoy your walk